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SUMMER PRUNING FOR WITHERTIP

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Withertip is one of the worst fungus diseases of citrus trees in Florida. In the summer, trees affected by it may be distinguished by the yellowing and falling of leaves on certain branches. If the disease is in an active condition, the bare limbs from which the leaves have recently fallen will be seen to be gradually dying back, suggestive of a slow poisoning. The inside bark and cambium, nearer the body of the tree than the part already killed, will be abnormally yellow, and sometimes the limbs will be considerably stained. The calyxes and peduncles of fruit dropped in the spring turn brown, and under the hand lens show small raised points.

HOW TO PRUNE

It is of the highest importance in pruning for withertip to cut out so much of the wood as to get rid, not only of the bare branches, but also of all the branches that show even a slight sign of the disease. In severe cases of withertip there are seen, in addition to bare branches, many limbs on which the yellowish leaves are about to fall. Close examination will show that the disease is slowly making its way back and poisoning these limbs. This poisoning may start from an infection at the tip, or from an infection on a side branch lower down, from which the poisonous effect has spread to the main limb. Sometimes only one side of a tree, or only one branch, is severely affected; while the remaining part of the tree is uninjured. The distance to which the disease has progressed can frequently be seen by the presence of new shoots with a sickly yellow color. Frequently the leaves fall from such shoots before they are half grown, leaving the bare young shoots to dry up. Whatever may be the conditions, it is important to get rid of all these poisoned limbs. To prune only half-heartedly usually makes matters worse, rather than better. When pruning, care should be taken to make smooth cuts, usually at the base of a branch or limb, so as not to leave any projecting stubs. This precaution should be rigidly carried out, because infection in these stubs is almost certain to occur when the withertip fungus is present. After prun-

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ing, paint the larger cut surfaces with carbolineum, pine tar, or grafting wax.

The grove should be given unusual care after a severe pruning of this kind. It should be well fertilized with a well proportioned formula so as to bring about a vigorous healthy growth, and to render the trees resistant to further attacks of the fungus.

WHEN TO PRUNE

Summer pruning for withertip should be done in July. It is important not to delay the work beyond this date. Do not prune while new growth is putting out vigorously, for this is almost sure to result in injury rather than benefit. Begin the work at once, and do not consider the looks of the trees, but take out everything that shows the presence of the disease.

The beneficial results already obtained on hundreds of acres of groves treated in this way, under the direction of Experiment Station workers, have proved the effectiveness of this treatment.

OTHER EFFECTS OF WITHERTIP

Different results of the attack of the withertip fungus are seen at other seasons of the year. These vary according to weather conditions and the part of the tree affected, and need different treatment. Some of these effects of the disease are: (1) dropping of bloom; (2) browning of tender leaves; (3) brown spotting of older leaves; (4) spotting of fruit (anthracnose); (5) tear-staining of fruit; and (6) yellowing and dropping of leaves and killing back of branches.

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